

# [***Greg Abbott Blasted for New Pardon: 'Worse Than Rittenhouse'***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C1X-5F91-JBR6-9005-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 888 words

**Byline:** Kaitlin Lewis

**Highlight:** The Texas governor granted a full pardon to Daniel Perry, a U.S. Army sergeant who was found guilty of killing a Black Lives Matter protester.

**Body**

Texas Governor [*Greg Abbott*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/greg-abbott?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) is getting slammed after granting a full pardon to the U.S. Army sergeant who shot and killed a protester during a [*Black Lives Matter*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/black-lives-matter?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) rally in 2020.

The sergeant, Daniel Perry, was found guilty of murder in April 2023 and sentenced to 25 years in prison. The [*Republican*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republican?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) governor said in a statement Thursday that he granted the pardon after an "exhaustive review" was conducted by the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles.

**The Context**

Perry was convicted of murder for killing 28-year-old Air Force veteran Garrett Foster, who was armed with an AK-47 while participating in a Black Lives Matter protest against police brutality in July 2020. Perry claimed during the trial that he shot Foster out of self-defense.

Prosecutors said that Perry initiated the deadly encounter by driving his car into a crowd of protesters who were rallying in downtown Austin. Perry told police, however, that Foster had raised his firearm at him before Perry shot him. Both men are white and were legally armed.

Court documents unsealed after the conviction also revealed that Perry had several racist and threatening comments online regarding the mass protests that broke out across the country in response to the death of [*George Floyd*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/george-floyd?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships). Perry also issued threats against the protesters via text messages that were shown to the court, including one message that read, "I might go to Dallas to shoot looters."

**What We Know**

Abbott's full pardon for Perry, which also restores his rights to bear arms, was ripped online by progressives such as Nina Turner, an activist and former Democratic state lawmaker in Ohio, who called the governor's decision "Absolutely horrendous."

"Where is the so-called 'pro-life' crowd?" Turner added in her [*post*](https://twitter.com/ninaturner/status/1791197567629349001) to X, formerly known as [*Twitter*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/twitter?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

Former Obama administration official Brandon Friedman also tore into Abbott's decision on social media, writing in a series of [*posts*](https://twitter.com/BFriedmanDC/status/1791191436005675307) to X, "Texas creeps closer to fascist lawlessness."

"[*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) want to legalize killing political opponents. Most won't say it publicly, but we're getting there," Friedman said.

"This is worse than [Kyle] Rittenhouse," he added. Rittenhouse was found not guilty of two counts of homicide in 2021 after he fatally shot two men and injured another during a night of protests and unrest in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in summer 2020. He argued that he shot the victims out of self-defense, and in recent years has become a conservative public figure.

"This guy [Perry] is literally a convicted murderer about to be pardoned by the 'Party of Law and Order,'" Friedman wrote.

Austin-based freelance journalist Christopher Hooks also took to X, stating his disappointment in Abbott's decision, [*writing*](https://twitter.com/cd_hooks/status/1791189868304908550), "This really sends a message."

"Here's the problem: Both Perry and the man he killed were carrying legally, and both could say they felt threatened," Hooks added. "Which man had the right to self-defense? Did both? Does the law protect only the man who shoots first?"

**Views**

Abbott, who had [*previously vowed*](https://www.newsweek.com/greg-abbott-faces-anniversary-pardon-promise-1885106?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) to grant Perry a full pardon, cited the Texas Constitution's right to bear arms and the U.S. Constitution's Second Amendment in his [*proclamation*](https://twitter.com/GregAbbott_TX/status/1791195038589829230/photo/1) Thursday. He also pointed to the state's law on self-defense, which states that one "is justified in using deadly force against another" if that person has reason to believe such action is "immediately necessary" to protect themself.

"Texas has one of the strongest 'Stand Your Ground' laws of self-defense that cannot be nullified by a jury or a progressive District Attorney," the governor said in a statement. "I thank the [Pardons and Paroles] Board for its thorough investigation, and I approve their pardon recommendation."

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, a Republican, backed Abbott's decision in a statement shared to X, writing that Perry's pardon was "a unanimous recommendation by the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles."

"Americans across the country have been watching this case in Texas and praying for justice after BLM riots terrorized the nation in 2020," Paxton wrote. "Our right to self-defense is enshrined in the Constitution."

The attorney general also took aim at Travis County District Attorney José Garza, a Democrat whose office led the case against Perry. In his own statement on Thursday, Garza lambasted the pardon.

"The board and the governor have put their ***politics*** over justice and made a mockery of our legal system," Garza said. "They should be ashamed of themselves. Their actions are contrary to the law and demonstrate that there are two classes of people in this state where some lives matter and some lives do not. They have sent a message to Garrett Foster's family, to his partner, and to our community that his life does not matter."

*Newsweek* sent an email to Abbott's office seeking additional comment on Thursday.

**What's Next**

Doug O'Connell, defense attorney for Perry, released a statement Thursday, thanking Abbott "for his decisive action" in restoring his client's "civil rights."

"I spoke with Daniel this afternoon," O'Connell said. "He is thrilled and elated to be free. Daniel is also optimistic for his future."

O'Connell also vowed to "fight to get Daniels' military service characterization upgraded to an Honorable Discharge."

*Update 05/16/24, 5:50 p.m. ET: This article has been updated with additional information and background.*

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2394446/greg-abbott-blasted-new-pardon.jpg)

**Graphic**

Greg Abbott Blasted For New Pardon

Brandon Bell/Getty Images

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott speaks at a news conference in the state Capitol on June 08, 2023, in Austin, Texas. Abbott was ripped on Thursday after granting a full pardon to Daniel Perry, a U.S. Army sergeant who was convicted of murdering a Black Lives Matter protestor in 2020.

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